

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2193

C O N F I D E N T I A L 3259

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EFIN, CG

SUBJECT: PAN AM - AIR ZAIRE

SUMMARY: MINTRANSPORT INONGA HAS WRITTEN TO PANAM VP RICHE CRITICIZING TAP TEAM PERFORMANCE IN GENERAL AND TEAM CHIEF HUTT IN PARTICULAR, SUGGESTING THAT HUTT BE REMOVED. INONGA THEN WROTE HUTT "SUSPENDING" HIM AND NAMING AS CO-DELEGATES GENERAL TAP TEAM MEMBER MIX AND CITOYNEN NGOIE. PANAM REP GATT SHOWED BOTH LETTERS TO BISENGIMANA WHO COUNSELED HUTT TO KEEP COOL AND PREDICTED THAT SITUATION WOULD BE TURNED AROUND. WE'LL SEE. END SUMMMARY.

1. AS REPORTED NEWLIN-STRAND LETTER OF MARCH 27, PANAM VP RICH DEPARTED KINSHASA AFTER ONE MEETING WITH MINTRANSPORT INONGA ON TAP CONTRACT PROBLEMS IN GENERAL AND QUESTION OF INONGA'S DISPLEASURE WITH TAP CHIEF HUTT IN PARTICULAR. SINCE INONGA WAS CALLED TO JOIN MOBUTU UP-COUNTRY, RICE FELT HE COULD NOT HANG AROUND KINSHASA INDEFINITELY AWAITING SECOND MEETING AND DECIDED INSTEAD TO HEAD BACK TO NEW YORK ON APRIL 4, LEAVING A LONG LETTER FOR INONGA--COPY OF WHICH WAS FORWARDED TO AF/C. AFTER RICE LEFT, IHC REP GATT KEPT IN TOUCH WITH BISENGIMANA WHO CONSISTENTLY COUNSELED HUTT TO BE PATIENT, THAT EVERYTHING WOULD WORK OUT AND THAT, INDEED, AIR ZAIRE WOULD END UP REPORTING TO PRESIDENCY RATHER THAN TO MINTRANSPORT.

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2. INONGA RETURNED FROM HIS TRIP APRIL 14 AND ON APRIL 16 HE DELIVERED TO PAN AM A BLISTERING LETTER ADDRESSED TO RICE. THE LETTER WAS DATED APRIL 15 AND RESPONDED POINT-BY-POINT TO RICE LETTER REFERRED TO ABOVE. A SAMPLING FOLLOWS:

A) ON-TIME TAKEOFFS: "WITHOUT BEING SPECIALIST IN CIVIL AVIATION... THESE LATE TAKE-OFFS ARE MORE A STRIKING MANIFESTATION OF A LACK OF COORDINATION (AMONG)... MAINTENANCE TEAMS, CREWS, CATERING, FREIGHT AND PASSENGER SERVICE." IN OTHER WORDS, TAP TEAM AND HUTT NOT DOING THEIR JOB.

B) HIGH RENTS: "I ORDERED A 50 PERCENT REDUCTION IN RENTS..AND TO MY SURPRISE I RECEIVED A LETTER FULL OF LEGALISMS WHICH DENOTED AN EXTRAVAGANT ATTITUDE...IN FACT THIS LETTER DATED 20 MARCH, SHOWED CLEARLY THE SPIRIT OF DISOBEDIENCE WITH MR. HUTT EVIDENCED TWO DAYS LATER IN ANOTHER LETTER..." LETTER CONTINUES, INSINUATING THAT PANAM'S NEW "RADIAL-AXIAL" PLAN FOR INTERIOR COVERAGE WAS IN FACT CONCEIVED BY AIR CONGO YEARS AGO, THAT HUTT ARGUED AGAINST KINSHASA-BEIRUT-RIO ROUTE BECAUSE HE WAS "AGAINST PROGRESS FOR AIR ZAIRE", THAT HUTT'S FAVORABLE DECISION IN SALARY MATTER OF COMMANDANT JOSHEM WAS AN "ACT OF PLUNDER" OF AIR ZAIRE.

3. THE KICKER COMES WHEN INONGA REMINDS RICE THAT HE HAD TOLD AMBASSADOR HINTON THAT HE WANTED HUTT REPLACED-- AND GOES ON TO ALLOW AS HOW COUNTING FROM DATE OF TALK WITH AMBASSADOR (MARCH 25) THE PERIOD OF TIME SET FORTH IN ARTICLE 5 OF THE TAP CONTRACT HAS ELAPSED. THE ARTICLE IN QUESTION DEALS WITH NOTICE BY EITHER PARTY WHEN IT WISHES TO REPLACE A TEAM MEMBER.

4. INONGA'S LETTER COVERS A REPORT "BY A GROUP OF ZAIRIANS " AT AIR ZAIRE WHICH REPORT SETS OUT OBLIGATIONS OF BOTH PARTIES TO TAP CONTRACT AND CONCLUDES THAT PAN AM HAS NOT HONORED SPIRIT OF CONTRACT. THE REPORT SAYS PAN AM FAILED TO SUBMIT REQUIRED REPORTS, FAILED TO GET CONFIDENTIAL

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APPROVAL FOR TAP TEAM MEMBERS BEFORE HIRING AND ASSIGNED VEHICLES AND DRIVERS TO TEAM MEMBERS WHILE ONLY DIREGEN HUTT WAS SO AUTHORIZED. TAP TEAM MEMBERS ARE ACCUSED OF NOT WISHING TO UNDERTAKE THE ROLE OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS BUT INSTEAD OF TAKING OVER MANAGEMENT ROLES. THERE IS NOT ADEQUATE PLANNING, MANY TAP TECHNICIANS ARE NOT QUALIFIED, CAN'T SPEAK FRENCH. IN SUM, PAN AM HAS FAILED TO DO ITS JOB.

5. LAST SENTENCE OF INONGA'S LETTER ASSURES RICE OF EXECUTIVE COUNCIL'S DESIRE TO PURSUE COOPERATION WITH PAN AM IN FIELD OF CIVIL AVIATION, BUT CONCLUSION OF APPENDED REPORT CALLS FOR REVISION OF TAP "MANAGEMENT" CONTRACT TO CONTRACT FOR "COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE". ADDING IT ALL TOGETHER, INONGA WANTS HUTT TO GO AND MAY WANT REVISED CONTRACT WITH PAN AM WHEREIN ZAIRIANS WILL HOLD ALL KEY MANAGEMENT POSITIONS AND WHERE TAP TEAM MEMBERS WILL PERFORM AS TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS/ COUNSELORS.

6 AFTER FOREGOING DRAFTED, HUTT RECEIVED EVENING OF APRIL 17 ANOTHER LETTER FROM INONGA WHICH GOES OVER FOREGOING ALLEGATIONS IN LESS INFLAMMATORY BUT NO LESS ACCUSATORY TERMS AND WHICH CONCLUDES BY "SUSPENDING" HUTT AND NAMING "EN ATTENDANT" TAP TEAM MEMBER MIX AND CITOYEN NGOIE AS CO-DELEGATES GENERAL. INONGA ENDS THIS MISSIVE BY ASSURING HUTT THAT HE HAS TAKEN DECISION TO SUSPEND WITH CHAGRIN AND THAT IT WAS "DICIATED BY THE DESIRE TO SEE AIR ZAIRE PROGRESS AS PART OF THE HARMONIOUS COOPERATION BETWEEN PAN AM AND THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL."

7. GATT HAS SHOWN BOTH INONGA LETTERS TO BISENGIMANA WHO CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN THAT INONGA HAS OVERSTEPS HIMSELF AND THAT HUTT AND PAN AM MUST NOT OVERREACT OR GIVE ANY PRETEXT FOR FINAL BREAK. BISENGIMANA INSISTS THAT HE CAN TURN SITUATION AROUND AND THAT ULTIMATE RESULT WILL BE AIR ZAIRE REPORTING DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENCY WITH HUTT AS ITS HEAD. BIBI TOLD GATT: "TELL HUTT TO GO OFF TO MOANDA A FEW DAYS AND LIE IN THE SUN. I'LL PAY FOR THE TRIP MYSELF. GIVE ME TIME. THE PRESIDENT WILL RETURN THIS WEEK-END, OR I WILL JOIN HIM, AND THE PROBLEM WILL BE RESOLVED TO CONFIDENTIAL

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OUR SATISFACTION." WHETHER BISNEGIMANA STILL HAS THE POWER TO WIN THIS ONE IS A QUESTION OF SOME DEBATE, BUT WE CAN FIND NO FLAW IN HIS REASONING THAT PAN AM ND HUTT SHOULD COOL IT FOR A FEW DAYS. IT IS REMARKABLE THAT INONGA, IN SPITE OF THE TONE OF HIS LETTERS, HAS STOPPED SHORT OF EITHER FIRING HUTT OR TERMINATING CONTRACT. THERE ARE SOME CARDS LEFT TO PALY--MOST OF THEM IN ZAIRIAN HANDS. HINTON

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